

FRENCH RELICS FROM VILLAGE SITES OF THE HURONS.

THE GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF THESE RELICS IN THE COUNTIES OF
SIMCOE, YORK, AND ONTARIO.

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The French traders of the seventeenth century brought amongst the Huron Indians of Ontario large quantities of articles of European manufacture in exchange for the Indians' furs. The metal portions of these articles are found in abundance at the present day in those parts of the province inhabited by the Hurons at that time.

The most abundant relic of this kind is the iron tomahawk, thousands of which have been found in various parts of the province, but more especially in North Simcoe; and at the west end of Lake Ontario, where the Neuters dwelt. These tomahawks are of various sizes, but almost all of the same well-known shape, each bearing three crosses in relief on one side; their appearance is, however, too well-known to require a description.

Copper and brass kettles are also numerous, and are almost invariably found in the ossuaries. In nine cases out of ten these kettles, which were formed of sheet metal, were rendered useless by blows from a tomahawk upon the bases of the vessels. This practice of rendering useless every article deposited with the dead was, however, common to many tribes, the apparent object being to remove any temptation to desecrate the graves.

Besides tomahawks and kettles, there are iron knives, earthen and glass beads, copper bracelets and ear ornaments, and many other articles. The various kinds of French relics are well represented in the Museum of the Canadian Institute, where they can be minutely examined at any time, so that they do not require further notice here. We shall now proceed to the special subject of this paper—the geographical distribution of these relics over the Hurontario isthmus. The analysis by townships of the Huron village sites and ossuaries in the three counties of Simcoe, York and Ontario, which is given in the table accompanying this paper, shows certain evident facts regarding the geographical distribution of French relics. The information supplied by this table has been obtained from catalogues opened by the writer for each of the counties mentioned, in which details of each village site, ossuary, etc., have been collected and recorded. A majority of the sites were personally visited.

The Huron custom of settling in village communities and remaining for a considerable time, makes it an easy task to recognize the remains of one of their villages. These are indicated by abundant accumulations of charred soil and ashes, broken relics, etc.; complete relics are, unfortunately, becoming rare. In preparing these catalogues, therefore, although many sites were visited, it was almost impossible to obtain any relics. In most cases, accordingly, all that the writer

could do was to make notes of what relics had been found in past years from as many reliable sources as possible. It occasionally happened that the very fact of the former existence of a village or ossuary had almost passed from the recollection of the present inhabitants of the district.

Up to the present time the writer has made a record of the following Huron sites:—

Villages....	Simcoe....	218	York....	33	Ontario....	14
Ossuaries ...	"	122	"	5	"	6

[These figures do not include a considerable number of Algonquin village sites and burial grounds, which have also been recorded; they apply altogether to the sites once occupied by Hurons]

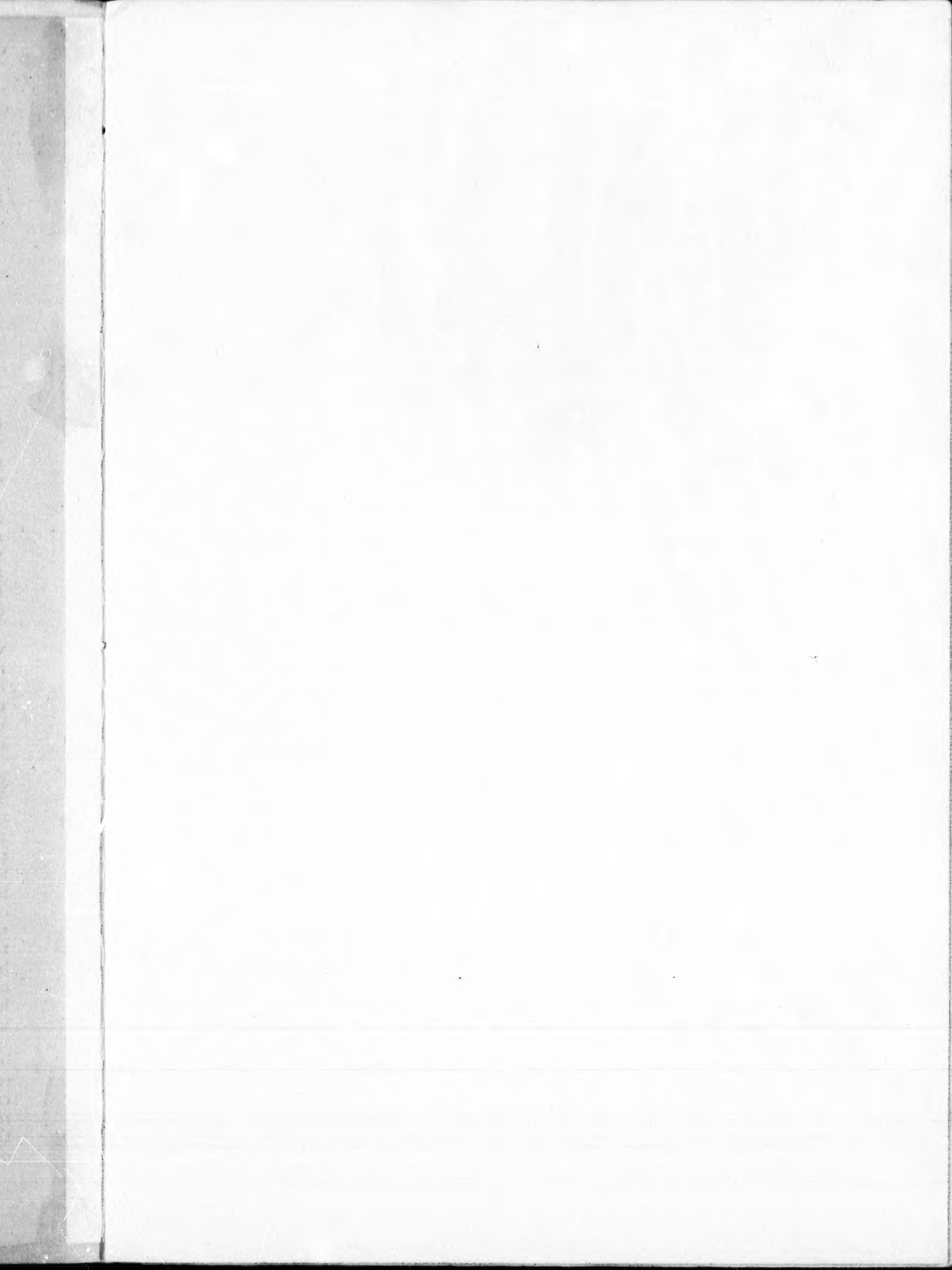
They do not indicate the absolute number of village sites and ossuaries in each county, nor are they any index of the relative numbers of sites which may subsequently be found to exist. They merely indicate the number recorded so far in each county according to our opportunities for making enquiries. They are, however, sufficiently representative to enable us to arrive at certain important conclusions respecting the geographical distribution of French relics.

Many persons have contributed valuable facts toward the preparation of the catalogues mentioned, for which the writer is under obligations to them; and it would be a long task to give the names of all those to whom credit is due. It will be sufficient for the present to say that the name of every person who became authority for a statement regarding any site, has been recorded in its descriptive account in the catalogues.

Further investigation may modify to some extent the statistics furnished here; but a degree of confidence may be placed upon the general relations indicated by the table:—

TABLE SHOWING THE GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF FRENCH RELICS IN THE COUNTIES OF SIMCOE, YORK, AND ONTARIO.

TOWNSHIP.	VILLAGE SITES.			OSSUARIES.		
	In Catalogues.	Post-French.	Percentage.	In Catalogues.	Post-French.	Percentage.
Simcoe County:						
Nottawasaga...	32	11	35	41	11	97
Tiny	27	14	51	19	9	42
Tay	16	12	75	18	9	50
Medonte.....	41	33	80	19	14	74
S. Orillia.....	4	4	100	2	1	50
Oro	23	8	35	9	5	55
Vespra	19	5	27	2	1	50
Floa	12	2	16	4	1	25
Innisfil.....	30	5	17	3		
W. Gwillimbury	5	1	20	2		
Tecumseth	7	1	14	3		
York County:						
E. Gwillimbury	4					
King	2					
Whitechurch...	6			2		
Vaughan	3			1		
Markham	3			2		
York	13	1	8			
Scarboro.....	2					
Ontario County:						
Scott	3			2		
Uxbridge.....	1					
Reach	6	1	16	2		
Pickering.....	3			1		
Whitby	1			1		
Totals	305			133		





The first column of the table gives the townships. In the second is given the number of village sites so far recorded in each township. The third contains the number of village sites at which French relics have been found, and the relative percentage which these bear to the whole number recorded is carried out into the fourth. This is done for the purpose of comparing one township with another. The fifth, sixth, and seventh contain similar statistics relating to the ossuaries.

The townships are arranged in the table, beginning at Georgian Bay and descending southward. Bearing this fact in mind and glancing down the fourth column, it will be observed how rapidly the percentage of villages where French relics have been found falls off after leaving the first few townships in the remote north beside Georgian Bay. This was the district occupied by the Hurons in the time of the Jesuit missionaries of the seventeenth century. If we draw a line from east to west through Kempenfeldt Bay on Lake Simcoe, it will be seen that of all villages south of this line less than twenty per cent. have yielded French relics. The difference in the geographical distribution of these relics on the two sides of this line is made apparent by contrasting one representative township from each part, say Medonte and Innisfil. In Medonte 41 village sites have been entered in the catalogue, of which no less than 33 (or 80 per cent. of them) have yielded French relics; while of 30 village sites in Innisfil, only 5 (or 17 per cent.) have yielded French relics, and merely one or two isolated tomahawks in most of these five cases. There is a wide difference here—viz., between 80 per cent. and 17 per cent., and this difference of geographical distribution can only be accounted for by supposing that the larger part of the villages of Innisfil, as well as of the others south of the line just drawn, were occupied by Hurons before the arrival of the French traders. In York and Ontario counties there is but one case in each, so far as the writer has ascertained, of European relics having been found at Huron village sites, and in neither of these cases is the evidence very conclusive. Many European relics have been found at Algonquin sites in these two counties, and the two cases in question may be of relics lost by later Mississagas on the ground previously occupied by the Huron lodges.

Independent evidence of a similar character is furnished by the ossuaries. There is no proof of any French relics having been found in the ossuaries south of the line through Kempenfeldt Bay, that is in South Simcoe, York, and Ontario. But in North Simcoe the percentage runs as high as 74.

The classification affords us a means of arriving approximately at the date of Huron occupation of these parts of Central Ontario under consideration. The beginning of French intercourse with the Hurons may be said to have taken place in 1615, when Champlain made his celebrated journey to their country. From that year onward traffic between the French and Hurons was established. So that speaking in a general way, this date, 1615, is the dividing line between post-French and ante-French villages. Wherever French relics are found, in most cases it may be concluded that the village dates after 1615. The table therefore shows that the sites in N. Simcoe, near Georgian Bay, were mostly post-French, while the more southerly ones—those in S. Simcoe, York and Ontario—were chiefly ante-French.

The former statement might readily have been inferred from our historical data of the first half of the seventeenth century, without the assistance of archæology; but little of an historical nature has been

known with regard to the numerous Huron sites of S. Simcoe, York and Ontario. It would appear from the table that they chiefly belong to a period preceding the sites of N. Simcoe.

There are references in the early French writers to an increase of population in the Huron tract (now North Simcoe) from which we may infer that what might be called a migration took place. Champlain and Le Caron in 1615 reckoned 17 or 18 villages in the Huron peninsula, with 10,000 persons. Brebeuf, in 1635—20 years later—found 20 villages, and about 30,000 souls. [*Relations* (Canadian edition) 1635, p. 33; 1536, p. 138.] Here is evidence of a rapid influx from some quarter into the sheltered peninsula of N. Simcoe, between the years 1615 and 1635.

The aborigines of any country are always found at the corner opposite to the point of entry of their invaders. This was the case with the early Celts of Britain, the Lapps of North Europe, the Basques of Southern France, and indeed with every race of conquered people known to history. It might therefore be expected that the Hurons would remove as far as possible from their enemies, the Iroquois; and it was in this position—against the northerly limit of land adapted to agricultural pursuits—that they were found by the early French.

These inferences from historical considerations have been fully confirmed by the table of sites given, from which it is evident that a removal from the sites of Ontario, York and S. Simcoe took place about the time the French first came.

In conclusion, it may be stated that there is another important feature of the N. Simcoe sites, not indicated in the table, and which though highly important, will be merely alluded to in this paper. The largest Huron village sites in the country are found there, and they are likewise post-French. It would appear from this that as danger from the invading Iroquois grew greater, the population became amassed into larger villages for safety.

